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## Notice of Funding Opportunity

**Title:** Department of Transportation – FY 2021 National Infrastructure Investments (i.e., the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Program

**Website:** <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=332831>

**Funding:** Total: \$1,000,000,000. Maximum awards: \$25M, depending on project and location.

**Dates:** Application Submission Deadline: July 12, 2021

**Summary:** The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (“FY 2021 Appropriations Act”) appropriated \$1 billion to be awarded by the Department of Transportation (“DOT”) for National Infrastructure Investments (now known as Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grants). RAISE Grants are for capital investments in surface transportation infrastructure and are to be awarded on a competitive basis for projects that will have a significant local or regional impact. In addition to capital awards, DOT will award no more than \$30 million for eligible planning, preparation or design of projects eligible for RAISE Grants that do not result in construction with FY2021 RAISE funding, of which at least \$10 million will be awarded to projects located in or to directly benefit areas of persistent poverty. The FY 2021 RAISE round also highlights this Administration’s priorities to invest in national infrastructure projects that result in good-paying jobs, improve safety, apply transformative technology, and explicitly address climate change and racial equity.

### Project Topic Areas:

#### Capital Projects

Eligible projects for RAISE grants are surface transportation capital projects within the United States or any territory or possession of the United States that include, but are not limited to: (1) highway, bridge, or other road projects eligible under title 23, United States Code; (2) public transportation projects eligible under chapter 53 of title 49, United States Code; (3) passenger and freight rail transportation projects; (4) port infrastructure investments (including inland port infrastructure and land ports of entry); (5) intermodal projects; and (6) projects investing in surface transportation facilities that are located on Tribal land and for which title or maintenance responsibility is vested in the Federal Government. Other than projects described in this section, improvements to Federally owned facilities are ineligible under the FY 2021 RAISE program. Research, demonstration, or pilot projects are eligible only if they will result in long-term, permanent surface transportation infrastructure that has independent utility.

#### Planning Projects

Activities eligible for funding under RAISE planning grants are related to the planning, preparation, or design—for example environmental analysis, feasibility studies, and other pre-construction activities—of eligible surface transportation capital projects. In addition, eligible activities related to multidisciplinary projects or regional planning may include: (1) Development of master plans, comprehensive plans, or corridor plans; (2) Planning activities related to the development of a multimodal freight corridor, including those that seek to reduce conflicts with residential areas and with passenger and non-motorized traffic; (3) Development of port and regional port planning grants, including State-wide or multi-port planning within a single jurisdiction or region; (4) Risk assessments and planning to identify vulnerabilities and address the transportation system’s ability to withstand probable occurrence or recurrence of an emergency or major disaster.

### Funding:

The FY 2021 Appropriations Act appropriated \$1 billion to be awarded by DOT for the RAISE grant program. DOT will award no more than \$30 million (of the \$1 billion) for the planning, preparation or design of eligible projects, of which at least \$10 million will be awarded to projects located in or to directly benefit areas of persistent poverty. The FY 2021 Appropriations Act also allows DOT to retain up to \$20 million of the \$1 billion for award, oversight and administration of grants and credit assistance made under the program. In addition to the FY 2021 RAISE funds, unobligated program funds may be made available from prior rounds and awarded under this solicitation to projects that can be obligated before the

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obligation deadline associated with the respective prior year funds. The Department expects not more than \$30 million of prior year funds may be awarded. The FY 2021 Appropriations Act allows up to 20 percent of available funds (or \$200 million) to be used by DOT to pay the subsidy and administrative costs of a project receiving credit assistance under the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act of 1998 (TIFIA) or Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) programs, if that use of the FY 2021 RAISE funds would further the purposes of the RAISE grant program.

The FY 2021 Appropriations Act specifies that RAISE grants may not be less than \$5 million, except that for projects located in rural areas the minimum award size is \$1 million. Grants may not be greater than \$25 million. There is no minimum award size for RAISE planning grants, regardless of location. Pursuant to the FY 2021 Appropriations Act, no more than 10 percent of the funds made available for RAISE grants (or \$100 million) may be awarded to projects in a single State. Further, DOT must take measures to ensure an equitable geographic distribution of grant funds, an appropriate balance in addressing the needs of urban and rural areas including in tribal areas, and investment in a variety of transportation modes. Per the FY 2021 Appropriations Act, the Federal share of project costs for which an expenditure is made under the RAISE grant program may not exceed 80 percent for a project located in an urban area. The Secretary may increase the Federal share of costs above 80 percent for projects located in rural areas and for planning projects located in areas of persistent poverty. DOT shall give priority to projects that require a contribution of Federal funds to complete an overall financing package.

### **Project Requirements:**

#### Rural/Urban Definition

For purposes of this notice, a project is designated as urban if it is located within (or on the boundary of) a Census-designated urbanized area that had a population greater than 200,000 in the 2010 Census. If a project is located outside a Census-designated urbanized area with a population greater than 200,000, it is designated as a rural project. A project located in both an urban and a rural area will be designated as urban if the majority of the project's costs will be spent in urban areas. Conversely, a project located in both an urban area and a rural area will be designated as rural if the majority of the project's costs will be spent in rural areas. For RAISE planning grants, the location of the project being planned, prepared, or designed will be used for the urban or rural designation. This definition affects four aspects of the program: (1) not more than \$500 million of the funds provided for RAISE grants are to be used for projects in rural areas; (2) not more than \$500 million of the funds provided for RAISE grants are to be used for projects in urban areas; (3) for a project in a rural area the minimum award is \$1 million; and (4) the Secretary may increase the Federal share above 80 percent to pay for the costs of a project in a rural area.

#### Areas of Persistent Poverty

Areas of Persistent Poverty means: (1) any county that has consistently had greater than or equal to 20 percent of the population living in poverty during the 30-year period preceding December 27, 2020, as measured by the 1990 and 2000 decennial census and the most recent annual Small Area Income Poverty Estimates as estimated by the Bureau of the census; (2) any census tract with a poverty rate of at least 20 percent as measured by the 2014-2018 5-year data series available from the American Community Survey of the Bureau of the Census; or (3) any territory or possession of the United States. A county satisfies this definition only if 20 percent of its population was living in poverty in all three of the listed datasets: (a) the 1990 decennial census; (b) the 2000 decennial census; and (c) the 2019 Small Area Income Poverty Estimates. This definition for Areas of Persistent Poverty affects two aspects of the program: (1) there is no minimum grant size for a planning projects that are located in or are to directly benefit an area of persistent poverty, and (2) the Secretary may increase the Federal share above 80 percent to pay for the costs of a planning project that is located in or is to directly benefit an area of persistent poverty. The Department will only consider direct benefits to Areas of Persistent Poverty that are clearly and explicitly described in the application narrative.

#### Project Components

An application may describe a project that contains more than one component, and may describe components that may be carried out by parties other than the applicant. DOT expects, and will impose



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requirements on fund recipients to ensure, that all components included in an application will be delivered as part of the RAISE project, regardless of whether a component includes Federal funding. The status of each component should be clearly described (for example, in the project schedule). DOT may award funds for a component, instead of the larger project, if that component (1) independently meets minimum award amounts and all eligibility requirements; (2) independently aligns well with the selection criteria; and (3) meets National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements with respect to independent utility. Independent utility means that the component will represent a transportation improvement that is usable and represents a reasonable expenditure of DOT funds even if no other improvements are made in the area, and will be ready for intended use upon completion of that component's construction. All project components that are presented together in a single application must demonstrate a relationship or connection between them. DOT strongly encourages applicants to identify in their applications the project components that have independent utility and separately detail costs and requested RAISE grant funding for those components. If the application identifies one or more independent project components, the application should clearly identify how each independent component addresses selection criteria and produces benefits on its own, in addition to describing how the full proposal of which the independent component is a part addresses selection criteria. Each lead applicant may submit no more than three applications. Unrelated project components should not be bundled in a single application for the purpose of adhering to the limit.

**Eligible Applicants:**

To be selected for a RAISE grant, an applicant must be an Eligible Applicant and the project must be an Eligible Project. Eligible Applicants for RAISE grants are State, local, Tribal, and U.S. territories' governments, including transit agencies, port authorities, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), and other political subdivisions of State or local governments. Multiple States or jurisdictions may submit a joint application and should identify a lead applicant as the primary point of contact and also identify the primary recipient of the award. Joint applications should include a description of the roles and responsibilities of each applicant. DOT expects that the eligible applicant that submits the application will administer and deliver the project. If the applicant seeks a transfer of the award to another agency, a letter of support from the designated entity must be included in the application.